GIBBONS

downtown plan

Design Guidelines - Streetscape Development

Edmonton Metropolitan
Regional Planning
Commission

91-05904/

DESIGN GUIDELINES

GIBBONS STREETSCAPE DEVELOPMENT

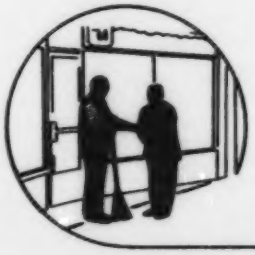
GIBBONS, ALBERTA

EDMONTON METROPOLITAN REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

MARCH, 1990

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
1.	Background	1
2.	Downtown Design Theme	1
3.	Design Guidelines	2
4.	Design Elements	2
	(a) Siting	2
	(b) Building Mass and Building Form	2
	(c) Building Materials	3
	(d) Building Design	4
	(i) Colour	4
	(ii) The Storefront	5
	(iii) Building Roof Lines	6
	(iv) Rear and Side Walls of Buildings	6
	(e) Awnings and Canopies	7
	(f) Signage	7
	(g) Lighting	8
	(h) Street Furniture	9
	(i) Pedestrian Surfaces	10
5.	Concluding Remarks	10



Design Guidelines

DESIGN GUIDELINES
GIBBONS STREETSCAPE DEVELOPMENT
GIBBONS, ALBERTA

1. Background

The Town of Gibbons Downtown Plan was completed in the fall of 1987 and adopted by Town Council in January, 1988. The plan identified and addressed a number of important issues and concerns within the downtown and provided a framework for guiding development and redevelopment in the area.

Physical improvements and the addition of new buildings are very important in maintaining the viability of the downtown as the business/commercial/social centre of the community. However, it is also important that these structures be attractive and interesting in order to create an environment which will attract a loyal clientele in addition to encouraging others to patronize and make use of the various services and facilities.

Buildings are the major component of the streetscape and thus greatly impact upon visual quality and experience in the downtown area. Their design in conjunction with other street elements such as open space, pedestrian space, focal points, landscaping, lighting and street furniture help to create and promote an image and atmosphere which can benefit downtown, as well as community development and well-being.

2. Downtown Design Theme - A Modern Progressive Community

Within downtown revitalization schemes, it is common practice to develop a theme or idea around which to organize and promote the central business area. In order for this approach to be successful, there must be a very strong and consistent identification or attachment to a particular subject or tradition, one which is recognized and accepted within the community. Such a theme is then easily built upon and can be promoted as part of the business development in the town.

Although Gibbons has various historical/agricultural/cultural origins and traditions, these are not of generally known nor highly visible. The Town, in its present state, is relatively "new" because of the great influx of people in the past ten to fifteen years. Thus, many residents may not be familiar with nor aware of the past and thus would prefer that emphasis upon development be present and future oriented. This approach is most realistic as it is very difficult to introduce and successfully promote a theme which is inappropriate or not readily accepted by the community.

The approach with respect to design in the Gibbons downtown should be one which depicts a modern and progressive community. This is not necessary a theme but will provide some guidance to downtown planning and development. Main Street (50 Avenue) has a mixture of older buildings, newer buildings and a considerable amount of vacant land. In order to create a sense of the downtown as an interesting and attractive destination, it is necessary to create some unity and continuity in the buildings and street amenities. This will provide some coherence and a sense of "place" which will distinguish the downtown and Main Street from any other place in the community.

3. Design Guidelines

Design guidelines are used by communities in order to encourage and direct development and redevelopment in a manner which will be of benefit to all sectors of the community. They are not intended to stifle individual style or design but set some basic parameters which should be recognized in order to better integrate and co-ordinate the downtown into a cohesive visual and functional unit.

It is often very difficult to gain a consensus upon, and adherence to, design guidelines. There are many different ideas, concerns, circumstances and other intervening factors which tend to act contrary to their intent and acceptance. Guidelines need not be rigid and uncompromising but can be flexible enough to accommodate a wide range of situations and conditions. However, in order to develop a better downtown environment there has to be a commitment to promote and incorporate the guidelines into new development and redevelopment if the opportunity should present itself. It is also important to realize that a downtown is under continuous transformation and development may occur in different places, at different times. Thus, in accepting and implementing guidelines it is necessary to be aware of the longer term view and goals of downtown improvement and revitalization.

4. Design Elements

(a) Siting

Siting is the placement of a building or structure on a parcel of land. It creates a relationship between the building and its surroundings - the street, parking areas, the sidewalk, adjacent and neighbouring structures, open spaces and street amenities.

Siting Principles

- West end of Main Street (50 St. to 51 St.) - buildings should be constructed to the front property line and thus abut the sidewalk
- East part of Main Street (50 St. to Highway 28A) - buildings should be oriented and located toward the sidewalk and the street; buildings should be setback from the sidewalk to allow for the inclusion of pedestrian and open space amenities adjacent to the buildings
- Parking or drop-off areas should not be located between the sidewalk and buildings.

(b) Building Mass and Building Form

Building mass and form are very important in downtown design as they create the basic physical structure of the street. The buildings are background or framework elements which will help to influence, direct and determine the evolution and development of the streetscape as a unit.

In some cases, the buildings within a street may be quite uniform in style and character because of their construction at one particular time. In other cases, the buildings may be very different due to construction over an extended time frame, infilling, reconstruction or renovation. However, it is important that existing buildings and new or proposed structures create a harmony and continuity within the streetscape.

Building Form and Mass Principles

- Maintain a height and width compatibility which is prevalent in the area; keep it within a fairly narrow range.
- Minimize spaces and infill vacant areas.
- Maintain the pattern established by repeating building and lot widths prevalent in the area; maintain/create/extend the rhythm of building mass and spacing.
- Maintain, expand upon and co-ordinate existing special forms which provide identity and character - towers, turrets, steeples, facades.
- Infill buildings should be designed to fit in with their surroundings; buildings should not be museum-type creations or adaptations as these are rarely successful; encourage good contemporary design in new building construction.
- Develop design treatment on the basis of an entire block to assure proper co-ordination of the various elements.
- Maintain the horizontal character of the downtown and add vertical elements for contrast, variety and interest.

(c) Building Materials

In conjunction with other design elements, the materials used in building construction are important in contributing to a coherent, interesting and attractive streetscape. Many downtown areas develop over an extended period of time and exhibit a mixture of different building materials. Thus, it is important to develop some continuity of use of construction materials while allowing for, and recognizing that there will be, situations where this may be inappropriate or undesirable.

Generally, the construction materials which should be used are those which are predominant in an area - a block, a portion of a block, a portion of a street or a larger design unit. New buildings should be constructed using similar materials; older buildings which have no architectural or historical value or significance should be renovated or redesigned in a manner that will integrate them with the remainder of the streetscape.

Older buildings of significance should be renovated or restored in a manner which will maintain their historical/architectural integrity. This requirement may entail some departure from the desired approach, especially if such buildings are few in number or in isolated locations. In such instances, other design elements can be used to harmonize them with the surroundings while retaining their distinctiveness.

Building Material Guidelines

- Historical or architecturally significant structures, in particular McLean Brothers and the Pop Shoppe Building, should be maintained/restored using the original building materials.

- New buildings and renovations should utilize materials which predominate in the downtown area - brick, exposed aggregate, concrete blocks, plaster, stucco. These materials will act as the background upon which detail and color may be added to provide interest. Avoid the use of cedar siding and shakes, metal cladding and vinyl siding.

- Use the various standard building materials in combinations and in an architecturally pleasing manner to create and maintain interest, uniformity and continuity in the streetscape.

(d) Building Design

The buildings along a street usually dominate the streetscape and as such provide the framework and background for the entire downtown area. In addition to mass, building design and detailing are very important in enhancing the attractiveness of an area as a shopping, business or entertainment destination.

(i) Colour - Exterior colour is one of the most important elements in creating street character and street atmosphere. The use of colour is a very subjective matter and there is often not a consensus on what is a "right" colour scheme. In general, the most effective colour schemes contain a very limited number of base colours. Also, they avoid very strong colours and those which are currently fashionable or faddish.

Colour Guidelines

- Co-ordinate a building colour scheme to create an harmonious and unified background.

- Traditional natural earth colours may be appropriate - reds, browns, soft greens, beiges, yellows - as they may be used in many combinations and with a variety of contrasting trim and highlighting colours.

- Retain or restore existing natural finishes where appropriate - brick, stucco, wood.

- Bright or contrasting colours can be used on trim, ornamentation, signage and awnings in order to provide individuality, variety, interest and liveliness.

- Co-ordinate colour on side and rear walls with that facing the street; maintain consistency and avoid dramatic changes so as to retain the continuity in the streetscape.

(ii) The Storefront - The storefront is an important feature of the streetscape as it provides a visual, physical and social link between the street, the shopper, and the interior of the building. It has a number of functions: (1) to enhance the street (2) to attract attention (3) to provide display space (4) to invite window shopping (5) to promote business (6) to encourage shoppers to enter (7) to promote a business atmosphere. Display windows are the main components of the storefront and serve as the connection between the interior and exterior of the building; they are a means of taking the store space into the street. The importance of the entrance should not be overlooked as it is an integral part of the storefront facade. It should be attractive and inviting as well as functional so as to encourage shoppers to enter the premises.

Storefront Guidelines

- Maximize display window space; do not block or reduce its size if it can be avoided.

- Avoid the use of large, blank wall areas along the street as this interferes with the visual connection along the shopping area.

- Use large display windows to increase the amount of natural lighting inside the store thereby increasing its attractiveness.

- If reduced display areas are required, decrease the size while maintaining the pattern of the large windows - use curtains, blinds, inside display cabinets with smaller openings, or "black-out" unwanted areas from behind.

- Encourage attractive, simple signage on display windows.

- Give store entrances some architectural prominence or emphasis so that they are easily identifiable and help to provide some character to the structure.

- Recess the doorways to define the entry, provide shelter, direct attention, create additional display space and provide intimacy.

- Doors should be simple and appropriate for the business; they should reinforce the character and appearance of the building and be co-ordinated with the windows to provide a unified appearance.

- Some decorative work may be added to the storefront - a cornice, columns, piers, ornamentation, base panels, - to provide identity and visual interest but this should be done in a sensitive manner.

(iii) Building Roof Lines - Roof lines are very prominent visual components of the downtown landscape as they are one of the main design elements in a building. The roof is the upper limit of the building and provides the termination point between it and its background. The roof line helps to define a structure but also helps to provide character and interest to the street. Roof lines may take a number of different forms - elaborate cornices, turrets, towers, pitched roofs, dormers, parapet walls, simple decorative trim, patterned brick work. Such roof line treatments provide identity to the building while adding to the completeness of the structure.

Roof Line Guidelines

- Retain traditional roof lines and decorative elements which may be present on older structures; if these have been removed or modified, restore them to their original form.

- Incorporate distinctive and interesting roof lines into new structures in a manner sensitive to the surroundings.

- Where appropriate, renovate/modify existing building facades to enhance the visual appeal of their roof lines.

(iv) Rear and Side Walls of Buildings - The rear and side walls of buildings are often overlooked in improvement schemes as most attention is usually given to the street front area. However, side building faces are important visual components of the streetscape. This is especially the case at street corners where blank walls are common or minimal attention is given to facade detailing. Also the establishment of parking lots behind the business street, through block walkways and the removal of buildings exposes buildings faces to public view.
Rear and Side Wall Buildings Guidelines

- In corner locations carry the building facade design "around" the corner to improve the continuity of the streetscape and to provide a physical and visual connection to adjacent businesses areas; extend canopies, trim work, cornice treatment and colour schemes to include side walls.

- In considering rear and side building improvements, retain the integrity of the structure, maintain the colour scheme, properly place awnings, signs and ornamentation and install appropriate lighting.

- Remove unused additions (pipes, stacks, grills, signs, electrical conduits etc) and screen unsightly objects (garbage cans, air conditioning units etc).

- Add landscaping to improve the visual effect and pedestrian environment.

(e) Awnings and Canopies

Awnings and canopies can be used to great effect to provide visual co-ordination and unity along the street. Consistency in height, width and location provides rhythm and pattern to the street face and helps to integrate attractive buildings with those which are less attractive.

In addition to this street co-ordination function, awnings and canopies can brighten and enliven the streetscape. They may be high impact and can provide an immediate and dramatic change in the visual appearance of a building or street. They serve as a frame or focus for the store and provide a surface upon which to provide attractive store identification. Appropriate signage, logos and colours and patterns may be incorporated into awning and canopy design.

Awnings and canopies also have an important business function in creating a better relationship between the interior store space and that outside the storefront - the sidewalk space. They tend to diminish the physical barrier between the inside and outside by extending the building over the sidewalk. This creates a contained and protected space where passersby can step out of sidewalk traffic movement and examine window-displays. These overhead structures also provide shelter and shade for the pedestrian as well as the merchant who wishes to display his goods on the sidewalk.

Awning and Canopy Guidelines

- The style of the awning should be appropriate to the commercial and urban context of the area, they must compliment the building facade with respect to form, style and size.
- Maintain the continuity of storefront awnings along individual buildings or along the block.
- Awnings and canopies should be consistent in height and location on storefronts.
- The bottom of the awning should be no less than seven feet above the sidewalk and width should relate to sidewalk width and to the location and type of lighting.
- Awning graphics and signage should be encouraged however, this must be done in a tasteful and appropriate manner.
- Avoid heavy wood or rustic designs; laminated synthetic fabric or canvas are preferable materials.

(f) Signage

Signs are an integral part of streets in business an commercial areas. They are an accepted part of business practice and allow merchants to provide an identity and to advertise their existence. Signs may also have an artistic or ornamental function which can help to provide interest, and variety to the streetscape.

However, the basic purposes of signs are often overlooked and abused with the results being visual blight and clutter which in turn defeats their purpose. Common sign problems include location, legibility, numbers, size and design. It is very difficult to control signage for visual improvement and at the same time allow for variety and diversity in order to avoid creating a dull and uninteresting environment.

Signage Guidelines

- Signage should not overpower the building or its facades; avoid the use of large highway type signs in downtown areas as the scale in these areas is oriented to the pedestrian and relatively slow traffic.
  Locate signs and logos on the storefront and restrict to two or three areas.

- Sign placement should respect neighbouring buildings and signs; it should be co-ordinated to avoid unsightly and unintended conflicts.

- Sign placement should not be imposed on non-uniform buildings; a variety of placements, each related to its own structure, helps to provide variety and avoid monotony.

- Avoid large projecting signs as they often dominate the storefront and interrupt the patterns and continuity of the street.

- Information an signs should be limited and lettering should be simple and clear; harmonize with the style of the building.

- Co-ordinate signage colour with that of building and street; it should be combatable with the building and the overall surroundings.

- Where appropriate and co-ordinated, signage should be permitted on awnings and canopies.

- Smaller scale signs may be used in display windows or doors and places at eye level to attract pedestrian attention; they should be placed to minimized the interruption of the view into the store as well as to minimize conflict with neighbouring signs.

(g) Lighting

The effective use of lighting in the downtown area can enhance its attractiveness by helping to provide an environment which is functional as well as safe and interesting. Lighting has both practical and aesthetic functions in the urban landscape; It: (1) illuminates streets and sidewalks; (2) creates the night-time environment; (3) identifies intersection, crosswalks, parking lots, bus stops, ramps, entrances; (4) provides safety and security; (5) adds visual order and structure - creates a sense of direction, directs movement, distinguish different areas or uses and defines spaces; (6) creates special effects - floodlight buildings, accentuate important features or areas, and add colour to the night streetscape. Lighting can also be used on special occasions to add emphasis or atmosphere.

Lighting fixtures are also important visual elements in the downtown during the daylight hours. Their physical presence and design contributes to the structure and appearance of the area and as such the visual impact is an important consideration in their design and location.

Lighting Guidelines

- Select a contemporary style of decorative lighting to be used in the downtown area; it should be co-ordinated with other street furnishings and properly located in order to be most effective.

- Relate lighting in pedestrian areas to pedestrians; primary lighting fixtures should be mounted three to five meters above the ground.

- Avoid the use of high level highway lighting as it tends to detract from the downtown area because it over illuminates and dominates the buildings.

- In areas where combined roadway and pedestrian lighting is desired, use lamps on low poles four to five meters in height.

- A combination of low level and high level lighting may be considered with the lower level type appropriately interspaced between the high standards and/or fixtures mounted on existing poles.

- Specialized lighting should be considered in special areas or particular situations however, it should be carefully co-ordinated with the surroundings and within the greater downtown context.

(h) Street Furniture - Street Furniture includes many different utilitarian and decorative elements which can enliven and add interest and variety to street area and outdoor spaces. Street furniture includes benches, waste receptacles, telephone booths, bicycle racks, planters, fences, kiosks, lighting, fountains, bollards, fire hydrates, pedestrian shelters, newspaper boxes, flags, banners, sculpture, parking meters, tree grates, street signs, mail boxes, bulletin boards and water fountains.

Street furniture may serve a number of different functions - to provide an area of public services; as an architectural element to add interest to the street; to identify or emphasize important points of interest or congregation; as an integrative feature to provide unity to various visual elements. These various functions must be co-ordinated in order that the downtown area be integrated in an effective and efficient manner.

Street Furniture Guidelines

- Co-ordinate the design and materials in accordance with the selected theme or concept; this will help to provide a unified environment.

- Where possible, group furniture at strategic locations but outside main pedestrian movement areas; create multi-purpose use nodes which may serve several functions such as seating, bicycle storage, information areas, waste disposal, etc.

- Avoid street clutter by minimizing the amount of furniture placed on the street or by eliminating unnecessary equipment.

- Provide a variety of groupings and locations for the amenities in order to accommodate different users and to take advantage of different locational attributes.

(i) Pedestrian Surfaces

The importance and influence of the walkway surface in establishing a downtown theme and atmosphere is often overlooked because attention is focused on projects which have a more noticeable and immediate visual impact. However, pedestrian surfaces provide a basic ground pattern and act as both physical and visual unifying elements. Texture and colour of the ground surface are important in the streetscape and should be pleasing and interesting as well as functional.

Pedestrian Surface Guidelines

- Determine pedestrian surface patterns to be used throughout the downtown area; incorporate the design into walkways and pedestrian districts as development occurs and when sidewalks are reconstructed.

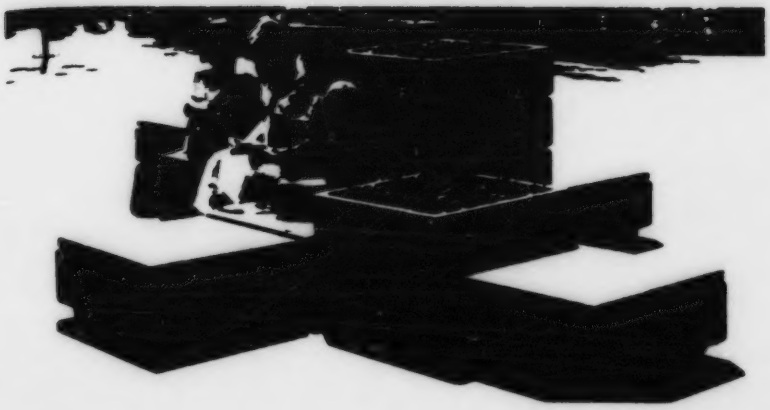
- Materials, colours and design should be integrated with the overall streetscape concept and co-ordinated with lighting, street function and buildings.

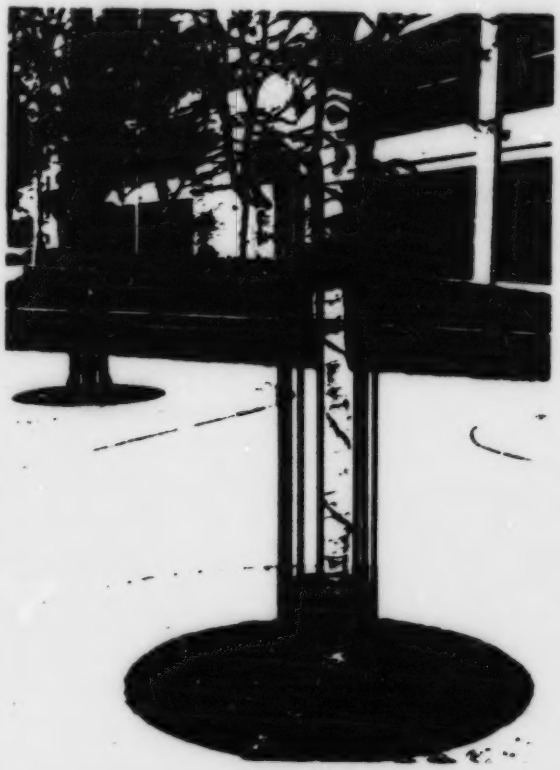
- Creatively use surface materials to delineate various street functions - identifying routes, defining pedestrian nodes, recognizing special areas, indicating store entrances, outlining parking areas.

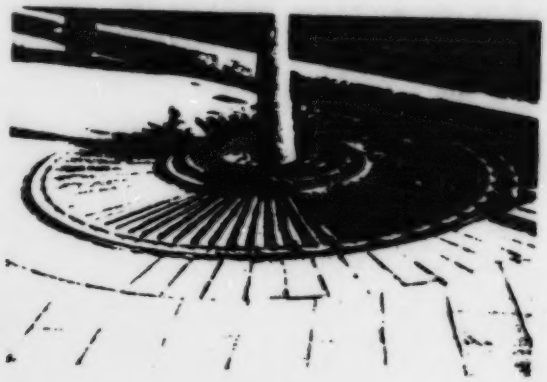
5. Concluding Remarks

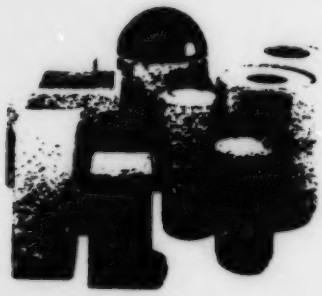
The physical and visual components of the streetscape work together to help create a downtown environment which is interesting, attractive and conducive to the development of trade and commerce. An integrated and co-ordinated approach to downtown development will be of benefit to the Town, to the merchants, to visitors and to the citizenry.

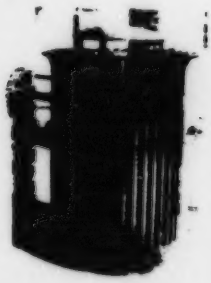
The establishment and use of design guidelines will help in the downtown revitalization process in Gibbons by providing some broad directions to those who have a desire to improve the business district on both an individual and collective basis. The guidelines have not been formulated to unduly restrict development nor impose unrealistic or impossible expectations but rather to provide additional information and direction so that the centre of the Town will grow in a manner which will benefit the entire community.

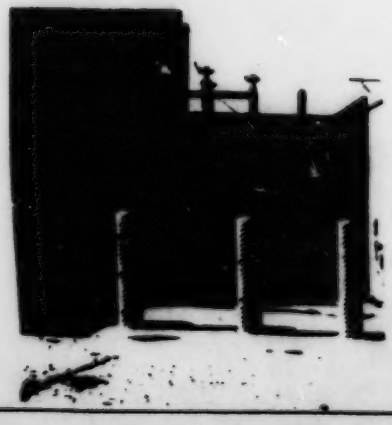




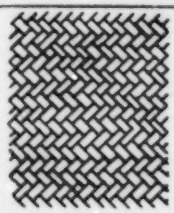


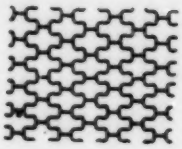


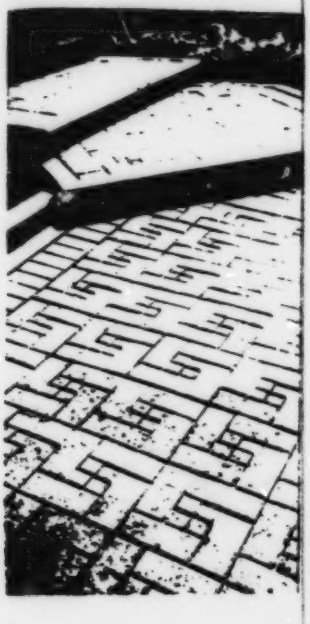


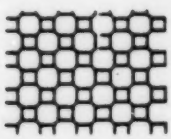


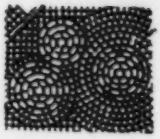
Examples of Contemporary Street Furniture

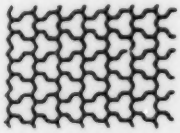


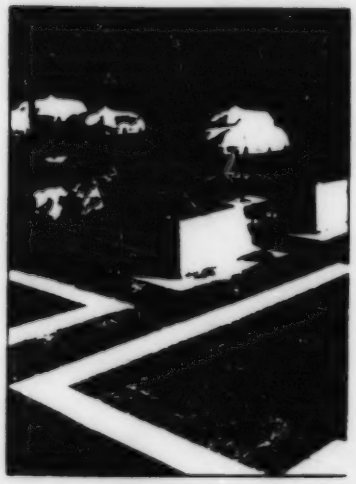


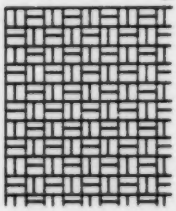


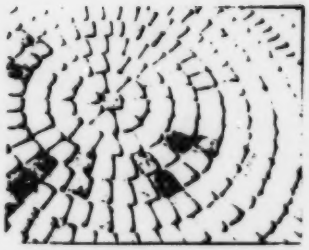


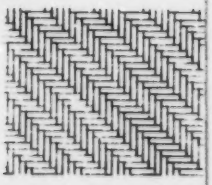


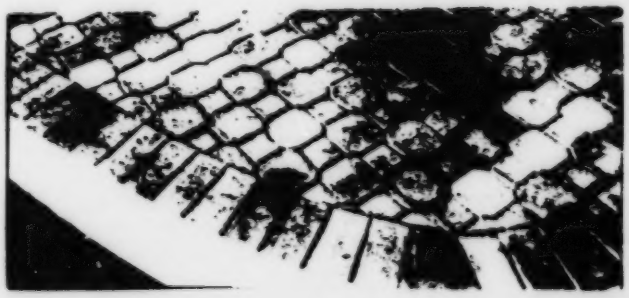




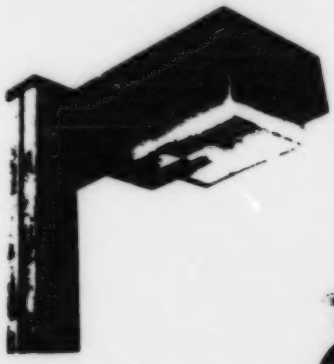


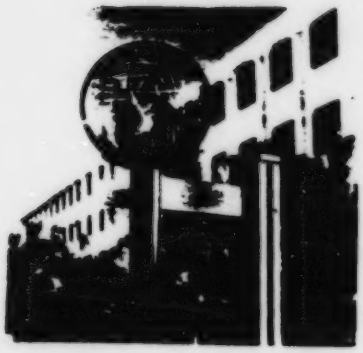


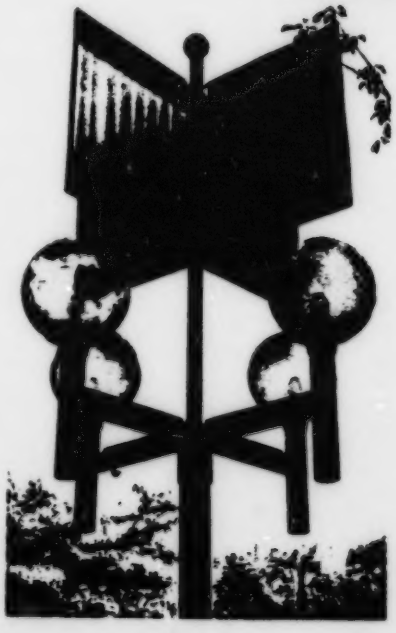


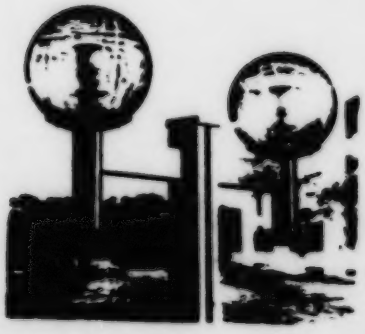


Examples of Pedestrian Surface Designs



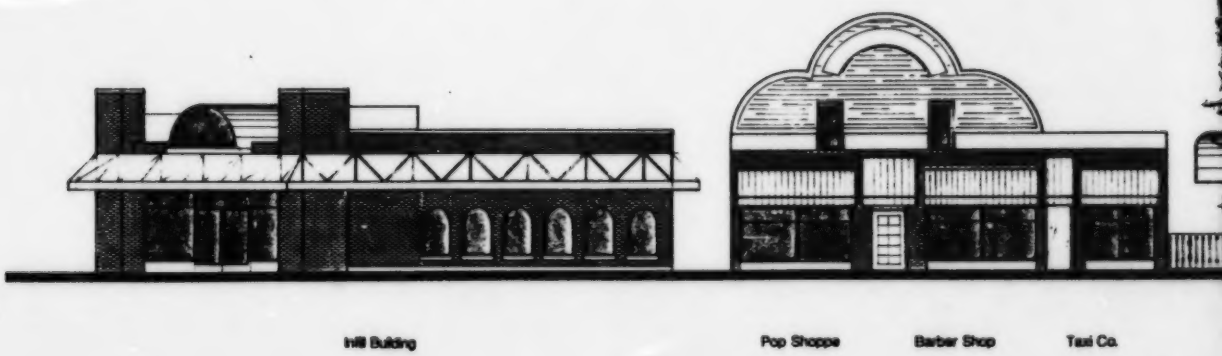






Examples of Contemporary Decorative Street Lighting

Conceptual Design Illustrations



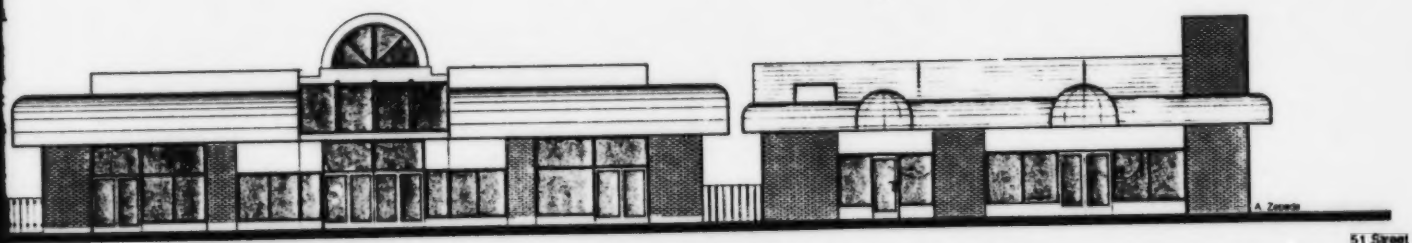
TOWN OF GIBBONS

STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS CONCEPTUAL DESIGN

MAIN ST
50 STREET

GIBBONS
downtown plan

Main St. S. : 50 - 51 St.



51 Street

Billard Hall

Laundromat

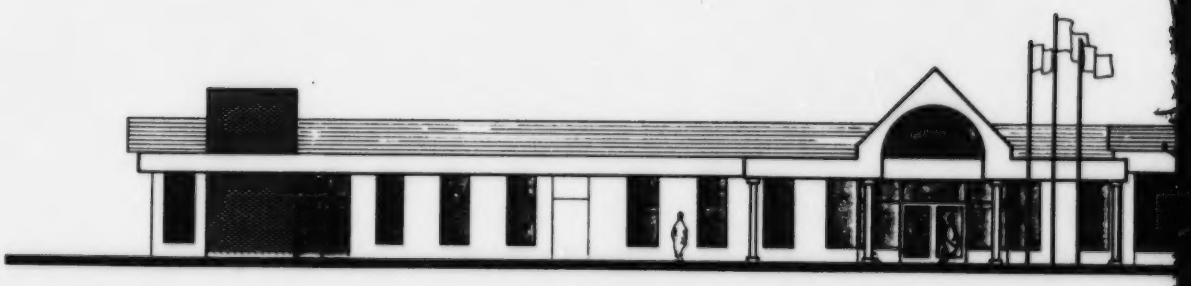
Janata's

WK Motors

TREET SOUTH
T TO 51 STREET

SCALE 1 : 100
November, 1989

EDMONTON METROPOLITAN REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION



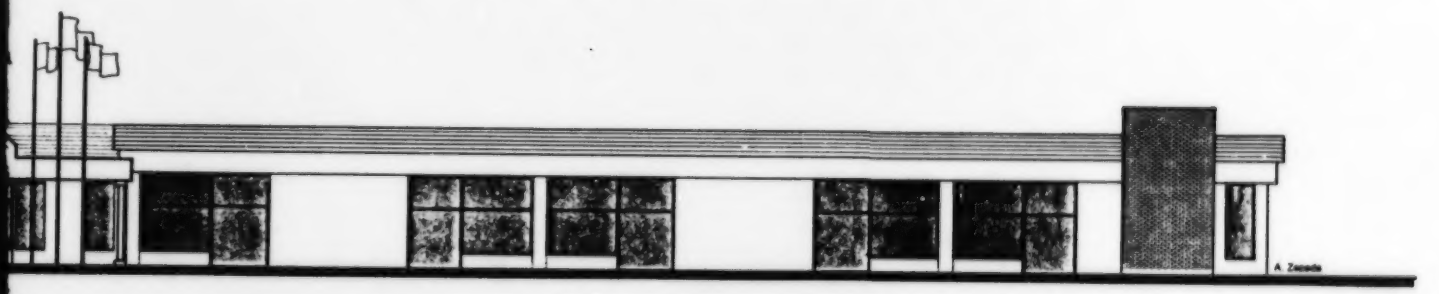
TOWN OF GIBBONS

STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS CONCEPTUAL DESIGN

MAIN STRE
47 STREET TO

GIBBONS
downtown plan

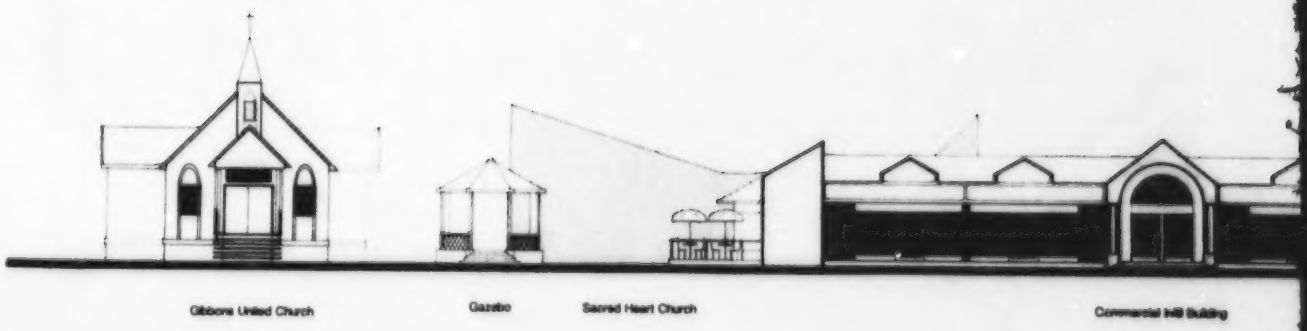
Main St. N. : 47 - 48 St.



AIN STREET NORTH
STREET TO 48 STREET

Scale 1 : 100
November, 1989

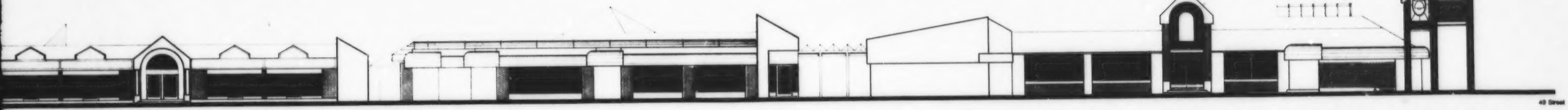
EDMONTON METROPOLITAN REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION



TOWN OF GIBBONS

STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS CONCEPTUAL DESIGN

GIBBONS
downtown plan
Main St. S. : 47 - 49 St



MAIN STREET SOUTH - 47 STREET TO 49 STREET

SCALE 1 : 100
November, 1989

EDMONTON METROPOLITAN REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION